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A Comparison of Zhiyi's 智顥 and Jizang's 吉藏 Views of the *Lotus Sūtra*: Did Zhiyi, after all, Advocate a “Lotus Absolutism”?

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Introduction

Among the systems of doctrinal classification (*jiaopan* 教判) that circulated during China's North-South Dynasties Period, there is a scheme known as the “five-period classification” (*wushi jiaopan* 五時教判).¹ Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠(523-592), Zhiyi (538-598), and Jizang (549-623), the so-called three great masters of the Sui 隋 all criticized the five-period scheme severely, from which we can infer that the five-period scheme enjoyed considerable influence in its time. Regrettably, sources that allow us a first-hand knowledge of North-South Dynasties doctrinal classifications are extremely lacking² and so we are compelled to approach this topic indirectly, by way of later works such as following:

Jingying Huiyuan's *Dasheng yizhang* 大乘義章,
Zhiyi and Guanding's 灌頂(561-632) *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義,
The works of Jizang,
Ji's 基 *Dasheng fayuan yilin zhang* 大乘法苑義林章, and
Fazang's 法藏(643-712) *Huayanjing tanxuanji* 華嚴經探玄記 and *Huayan wujiao zhang* 華嚴五教章.

¹ This scheme is not to be confused with Zhiyi's system of “five periods and eight teachings (*wushi bajiao* 五時八教)”.

² Fragments of this are to be found in the *Dabān niépan jīng jíjí* 大般涅槃經集解, which was compiled in the Liang 梁 Dynasty; but the system of five periods is never addressed directly. See Hiroshi Kan'no, “*Daihatsu nehangyō jūge ni okeru Sōryō no kyōhan shisō*”, *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* vol.35-1 (December 1986), pp. 78-81; and “*Daihatsu nehangyō jūge ni okeru Sōshū no kyōhan shisō*”, *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* vol.37-1 (December 1988), pp. 87-91. Fragments bearing on the five-period scheme are also to be found in Fayun's *Fahua yiji* 法華義記 On this subject, see Kan'no, *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: shunjūsha, 1994, pp. 154-164).

We know about two representative types of the five-period classification³, through the introduction of Jingying Huiyuan and Jizang. Jingying Huiyuan introduced the classification system of Liu Qiu 劉虬(438-495).⁴ Jizang described the classification system of Huiguan 慧觀(d.u).⁵ The two schemes differ somewhat in content, but they share a common concern for establishing hierarchical gradations of value between the various Mahāyāna sūtra. That is to say, one of their foremost hermeneutic concerns is to determine whether a given Mahāyāna sūtra possesses value that is relatively higher than that of other Mahāyāna sūtra, or whether there is one Mahāyāna sūtra in particular that possesses supreme value with regard to all the sūtra. Thus, for example, we find that the *Lotus Sūtra* is accorded a higher value than the *Prajñā sūtras*, but that is inferior in status to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

However, this paper is not concerned specifically with the differences between these two schemes of five-period classification. Rather, after providing a brief introduction to the five-period scheme of Huiguan as described by Jizang, I will proceed to clarify Jizang's basic idea that "the Mahāyāna sūtras are without difference in their revealing of ultimate reality"— a view of the Mahāyāna sūtras that Jizang established in direct criticism of Huiguan's position.⁶ I will further show that Jizang's way of thinking also displays some

³ There are other types of the five-period doctrinal classification introduced in the *Dapin youyi* 大品遊意, a text that is attributed to Jizang which some hold to be the work of someone else. See T 33.66b-c.

⁴ Liu Qiu was a scholar who lived in reclusion (*yinshi* 隱士) during the Southern Qi 齊Dynasty and an ardent devotee of Buddhism. His *Wuliangyi jing xu* 無量義經序(Preface to the *Sūtra of Illimitable Meaning*) still survives. While his *Zhu Fahua jing* 注法華經(Commentary to the *Lotus Sūtra*) is no longer extant, it is quoted numerous times in Jizang's Commentaries to the *Lotus Sūtra*. See Kan'no, *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū*, pp. 117-140.

⁵ A disciple of Kumārajīva, Huiguan's *Fahua zongyao xu* 法華宗要序(Preface on the Essential Theme of the *Lotus Sūtra*) is still extant. For his view of the *Lotus Sūtra*, see Kan'no, *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū*, pp. 20-24.

⁶ Liang Wu Di 梁武帝already provided a partial criticism of Huiguan's five-period classification in his *Zhujie dapin xu* 注解大品序(*Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, T 55.53c-54c). That is to say, he criticized the status accorded to the *Prajñā sūtras* in the five-period classification on four basic grounds: the idea that (1) the *Prajñā sūtras* are inferior to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, (2) that the *Prajñā*

commonalities with Huiyuan. On the basis of these preparatory forays into Jizang's and Jingying Huiyuan's equanimous view of the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, I will continue to discuss the doctrinal classification of Tiantai Zhiyi 天臺智顥, the chief concern of this article. The main question here is whether Zhiyi, after all, really took the posture of asserting a “*Lotus Sūtra* absolutism”—the idea that the *Lotus Sūtra* stood supreme among all the *sūtras* or discourses on the Dharma that the Buddha delivered over the course of his career.⁷ To state my conclusion up front: it is my contention that Zhiyi was decidedly not an absolutist when it comes to the *Lotus Sūtra*. Rather, it is more fitting to call him a “perfect teaching” (*yuanjiao* 圓教) absolutist, ascribing to a view that all the *Mahāyāna sūtras* are equal, a view that is fundamentally identical with those of his contemporaries, Huiyuan and Jizang. Finally, as a matter of general methodological perspective on this issue, I would like to suggest that it is essential to distinguish two fundamentally different hermeneutical orientations when it comes to investigating questions of Zhiyi's doctrinal classification: ① organize the order by which the Buddha preached the Dharma over the course of his own career; ② design concrete forms of religious practice suited to the conditions at hand, the concern for which was peculiar to the new Buddhism of Zhiyi's own day.

Part One: Huiguan's 慧觀 Five-period Classification Scheme

A fairly detailed introduction to Huiguan's system of five-period classification is

sūtras are inferior to the *Lotus Sūtra*, (3) that the *Prajñā sūtras* are referred to as the common teaching of the three vehicles and, as such, is a teaching for the śrāvaka, and (4) that the *Prajñā sūtras* are to be relegated to the second period of the gradual teaching.

⁷ Andō Toshio states in his *Tendai gaku - konpon shisō to sono tenkai* (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1968), “The final completion of a system of doctrinal classification that promoted a full *Lotus* absolutism must be ascribed to the efforts of Zhiyi.” (p.58); also, “Disassociating himself from the Dilun 地論 theories of north China, which regarded the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* as the superior *sūtra*, and the theories of *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* exegetes in the south, who regarded the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* as superior, Zhiyi newly laid the scholastic foundation for promoting the *Lotus Sūtra* as the supreme *sūtra*. The spirit of *Lotus Sūtra* absolutism that was nascent in the teaching of Huisi 慧思, who was active to the north of the Yangzi River, came into full bloom with the completion of the Tendai 天臺 system of doctrinal classification in the regions south of the Yangzi. (p.60)

provided in Jizang's *Sanlun xuanyi*⁸ part of which states:

As for this idea of five periods, when the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* first found its way into the region south of the Yangzi 楊子 River, the Song-period 宋 monk Huiguan from Daochang 道場 Monastery composed a preface for it, and he divided the whole of the Buddhist sūtras into two basic categories. The first category was the sudden teaching, with which he identified the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* reveals the truth in full only for the bodhisattvas. The second category begins with the Deer Park [the site of Mṛgadāva, where the Buddha first turned the wheel of Dharma] and ends with the Sāla grove [the site where the Buddha entered parinirvāṇa]. It proceeds from the shallow to the profound, for which it is known as the gradual teaching. The gradual teaching unfolds by way of five periods (*wushi* 五時). In the first period the three vehicles are taught individually or separately. The second period corresponds to the preaching of the *Prajñā* sūtras. Because the latter instructs the three capacities (*ji* 機) of śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva conjointly, it is also called the “pervasive teaching for the practitioners of the three vehicles.” The third period is that of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and *Brahmapariprcchā Sūtra*. The bodhisattva is praised and the śrāvaka is censured and on this basis it is called the “teaching that censures and praises.” The fourth period corresponds to the preaching

⁸ Huiguan's five-period system is also introduced in fascicle 10A of the *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義 (T 33.801a-b), but the names for the doctrines of the five periods are different from those given in the *Sanlun xuanyi*. For example, the doctrine of the separate exposition of the three vehicles in the *Sanlun xuanyi* is called the teaching that posits distinguishing characteristics in the *Fahua xuanyi*; the doctrine of the common exposition of the three vehicles in the *Sanlun xuanyi* is known as “the formless or featureless teaching” in the *Fahua xuanyi*. In the *Sanlun xuanyi* we observe a naming that is based on the “equality” and the “divergence” of the practice and the effect of the three different practitioners - śrāvaka, pratyeka-buddha and bodhisattva. In the *Fahua xuanyi* we observe a naming that is based on an ontological view concerning all phenomena. The doctrine of the teaching that censures and praises in the *Sanlun xuanyi* is expanded in the *Fahua xuanyi* to become the “teaching that extols and disregards, censures and praises, obviously the meaning is the same. For the issues that are the particular concern of this article, the differences in terminology of these two systems need not be seen as a problem.

of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Here the three vehicles are brought together and returned in common to the singular and ultimate end, whence it is known as the “teaching that reverts to commonality or sameness.” The fifth period is the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, which is known as “the teaching of the eternal abiding.” (T 45.5b)⁹

For convenience of explanation, the scheme may be illustrated as follows:

Sudden Teaching	<i>Avatamsaka / Huayan Sūtra</i>
Gradual Teaching (Five Periods)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Three vehicles taught individually or separately (<i>Āgama sūtras</i>) ② Three vehicles taught in common (<i>Prajñā sūtras</i>) ③ Teaching that censures and praises (<i>Vimalakīrti</i>, <i>Brahmapariprcchā</i>, etc.) ④ Teaching that reverts to commonality (<i>Lotus Sūtra</i>) ⑤ Teaching of Eternal Abiding (<i>Nirvāṇa Sūtra</i>)

According to Jizang, this classificatory system of the five periods was used variously by the three great Dharma-masters of the Liang 梁 period: Zhizang 智藏(485-522) of Kaishan 開善Monastery, Sengmin 僧旻(467-527) of Zhuangyan 莊嚴Monastery, and Fayun 法雲 (476-529) of Guangzhai 光宅Monastery.¹⁰ In addition to its eliciting the basic thought

⁹ Certain scholars have dismissed citations of Huiguan’s *Niepan xu* 涅槃序(Preface to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*) in Jizang as unreliable, since the *Niepan xu* itself no longer survives. On the basis of the evidence that remains they have suggested that Huiguan’s sudden, gradual, and five-period classification scheme was actually a product of someone from a later period. But Huiguan himself knew not only of the existence of the *Prajñā*, *Vimalakīrti*, *Brahmapariprcchā*, and *Lotus sūtras*, but of the existence of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, and *Avatamsaka Sūtra* as well. For example, he himself took part in the effort to recodify the forty fascicle northern text of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* translated by Dharmakṣema 瞞無纖 and produce the thirty-six fascicle text of the southern version of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. As for the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, it wa translated into Chinese at Daochang 道場寺Monastery in Jiankang 建康by Buddhabhadra 佛馱跋陀羅(359-429) in 418, and Huiguan himself resided at none other than Daochang Monastery. As such, there are also scholars who support the possibility that the person who formulated this system of doctrinal classification was Huiguan himself. But we will not entertain this problem of authorship of the five-period classificatory system here.

¹⁰ According to fascicle 10A of the *Fahua xuanyi* (T 33.801a-b), Sengmin subscribed to a four period system of doctrinal classification. In addition to Zhizang and Fayun, the names of Sengrou 僧柔 of Dinglin 定林Monastery (431-494) and Huiji 慧基(434-490) are also mentioned as persons

from the most important Mahāyāna sūtras, the particular strength of this classificatory scheme lies in its using the basic principle that “the Buddha’s teaching evolved from shallow to profound” as a means to locate schematically the relative place of the more important Mahāyāna sūtras in the Buddha’s career. On the basis of such a scheme, it became possible for people to develop a systematic understanding of the incredible miscellany of teachings that were traditionally attributed to the Buddha. To this end, the system of five periods is considered to have carried great influence in the North-South Dynasties Period, a period when the necessity of doctrinal classification was itself intensely promoted.

Part Two: Jizang’s Criticism of the Five-period Classification and his Advocacy of the Equality of the Mahāyāna sūtras

Criticisms of the five-period classificatory scheme appear scattered throughout Jizang’s writings. For example, in the third fascicle of his *Fahua xuanyun* 法華玄論, Jizang quotes extensively citations from sūtras and treatises, he notes that there are only two wheels of the Dharma, those of the Mahāyāna and the Hinayāna (or the bodhisattva canon and the śrāvaka canon), and that distinctions such as the three doctorines –sudden, gradual, and indeterminate–have no basis in the scriptures.¹¹ He states:

“These various sūtras and treatises only elucidate the two vehicles of the Mahāyāna and

who used the five-period system.

¹¹ Jizang introduces the sudden and gradual doctrines (together with the latter’s distinction into five periods) of Huiguan’s *Niepan xu* in his *Fahua xuanyun* 3, after which he states, “A later person [after Huiguan] altered his teaching by adding one more element, producing an additional ‘methodless doctrine or teaching’ (*wufang jiao* 無方教). (T 34.382b). Such scriptures as the *Śrimālā Sūtra* and the *Sucarṇapravṛbhāsa Sūtra* were not something preached at the very outset of the Buddha’s career, as was the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. Nor can they be considered to have been preached near the time of the Buddha’s death at the end of his more than forty-year career. Being sūtras that expound the idea of the One Vehicle and the eternity of the Buddha’s body, they also cannot be accommodated into the existing system of the sudden, gradual, and five-period classificatory scheme. Hence they are accommodated by invention of a new category known as the “methodless doctrine.”

Hinayāna. Therefore, there are only two forms of Dharma-wheel, and one should not posit the further existence of three [sudden, gradual, and indeterminate] teachings.” (T 34.382c). Again, on the subject of scrutinizing the spiritual capacities of sentient beings, he says: “We thereby know that there should only be two teachings, and that we should not posit the existence of three teachings.” (T 34.382c). Thus he comes to the same conclusion.

As we stated earlier, the five-period classificatory scheme introduced elemental distinctions of value among the Mahāyāna sūtras, on the basis of their relative doctrinal profundity. However, Jizang advances a way of thinking that would see the different Mahāyāna sūtras as equal in value, from which vantage he criticizes the five-period classification. What is more, even in instances where he does not mention the five-period scheme explicitly, Jizang manages to effect a thorough-going criticism of this system by making copious comparisons between the *Lotus Sūtra* and the various other Mahāyāna sūtras. In other words, taking the *Lotus Sūtra* as his focus, he compares the *Lotus Sūtra* with other Mahāyāna sūtras (specifically speaking, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, the *Prajñā Sūtra*, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, and the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*), during the course of which he mounts a substantial criticism of the five-period classificatory system.

For example, in the five-period system the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* which is identified with the sudden teaching is accorded an exalted status that is utterly distinct from that of the sūtras of the five periods of the gradual teaching. However, when Jizang compares the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, he comes to the conclusion that the two sūtras fundamentally possess the same value; and this conclusion is identical with a concrete criticism of the views of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* that are posited in the five-period system.

In the same way, we find criticism directed toward the five-period scheme on the basis of its notion that the *Prajñā sūtras* are inferior to the *Lotus Sūtra*, or criticism directed to the five-period scheme’s assertion—on the grounds that the *Lotus Sūtra* does not expound the doctrine of the Buddha-nature or the eternal abiding of the Buddha—that the *Lotus*

Sūtra is inferior to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. But since it is not possible in the space of this article to introduce in detail Jizang's comparative studies on the various Mahāyāna sūtras,¹² we will confine ourselves to examining Jizang's basic view of the sūtras as expressed in his idea that "there is no difference among the Mahāyāna sūtras with respect to their revealing of ultimate reality."

Jizang states in *Fahua xuanlun* vol.2, "With respect to their revealing of ultimate reality, there should or will be no difference between the various Mahāyāna sūtras." (T 34.378c). In *Fahua yishu* 法華義疏 vol.5 he says, "The Mahāyāna sūtras are not different in their revealing of ultimate reality." (T 34.518c). From this idea that there are no differences between the numerous Mahāyāna sūtras with respect to their capacity to reveal ultimate reality, it follows that Jizang advocated a basic equality in their status or value. And indeed, this notion is the foundation of Jizang's view of the Buddhist scriptures is a fact that is already quite well known.¹³

But why did Jizang think that "there is no difference between the Mahāyāna sūtras with respect to their revealing of ultimate reality"? I would like to try to clarify this idea by looking for its reason in his four perspectives on the manifest (*xian* 顯) and secret (*mi* 密) and four perspectives on the primary (*zheng* 正) and subsidiary (*pang* 傍). The *Fahua xuanlun*¹⁴ and *Sanlun xuanyi*¹⁵ indicate that Jizang's decisive distinction between Hinayāna and Mahāyāna doctrine is, formally speaking, something that is based on the sūtras and commentarial treatises. However, its conceptual or intellectual foundations must be sought elsewhere. A possible solution to this question might be found in the four perspectives of the manifest and the secret and the four perspectives of the primary and

¹² On this subject, see Kan'no, *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū*, pp. 399-482.

¹³ Hirai Shun'ei, *Chūgoku hanrya shisō shi no kenkyū - Kichizō to Sanron gakuha* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1976), pp. 482-484; Itō Takatoshi, Kichizō no kyōten kan to taiki no mondai, *Nippon bukkyō gakkai nempō* vol.49 (March 1983).

¹⁴ T 34.382b-c.

¹⁵ T 45.5b-c.

subsidiary as expounded in Jizang's *Fahua youyi* 法華遊意.¹⁶ The four perspectives of the manifest and the secret are listed as follows:¹⁷

(1) Manifestly instructs the bodhisattvas, but does not secretly teach the śrāvakas	<i>Avatamsaka Sūtra</i>
(2) Manifestly instructs the śrāvakas, but does not secretly teach the bodhisattvas	<i>tripitaka</i> teaching
(3) Manifestly instructs the bodhisattvas, while secretly teaches the śrāvakas	<i>Prajñā sūtras</i>
(4) Manifestly instructs the bodhisattvas, and manifestly teaches the śrāvakas	<i>Lotus Sūtra</i>

Then again, the four gates of subsidiary (*pang*) and primary (*zheng*) may be represented as follows:¹⁸

(A) Primarily reveals ultimate reality, but subsidiarily reveals the expedient means (as expedient means)	<i>Avatamsaka Sūtra</i>
(B) Primarily teaches expedient means without revealing (it as expedient means); primarily conceals ultimate reality	<i>tripitaka</i> teaching
(C) Primarily reveals ultimate reality; subsidiarily teaches expedient means without revealing (it as expedient means)	<i>Prajñā sūtras</i>
(D) Primarily reveals the expedient means (as expedient means); primarily reveals ultimate reality	<i>Lotus Sūtra</i>

When we consider conceptual differences between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna on the basis of this scheme, they look something as follows: The Mahāyāna sūtras of items (1), (3), and (4) in the first set and items (A), (C), and (D) of the second set share the common feature of "manifestly instructing the bodhisattvas" (*xianjiao pusa* 顯教菩薩) and "primarily revealing ultimate reality" (*zheng xian zhenshi* 正顯真實).¹⁹ (The position

¹⁶ These two schemes are expounded in *Jingming xuanchun* 淨名玄論vol.7 (T 38.900b) and *Weimojing yishu* 維摩經義疏vol.1 (T 38.909b-c). Muranaka Yūshō, Kajō daishi nizō gi no seiritsu kō , *Nanto bukkyō* vol.22 (January 1969), *idem.* in *Tendai karmon no kichō* (Tokyo: Sankibō busshorin, 1986).

¹⁷ T 34.645a.

¹⁸ T 34.645b-c.

¹⁹ In the *Fahua youyi*, "ultimate reality" (*zhenshi* 真實) is variously fixed or identified with "the

toward the śrāvakas is characterized by the different strategies expressed in the three points of “not secretly teaching,” “secretly teaching,” and “manifestly teaching.” Even in terms of the use of expedients, the śrāvaka occupies a position of “subsidiarily revealing the expedient means,” “subsidiarily teaching the expedient means unrevealed,” and “primarily revealing the expedient means.”) In contrast to this position, it can be ascertained that the Hīnayāna does not teach the bodhisattvas and it conceals the ultimate truth. Consequently, it is only for the bodhisattvas that ultimate reality is manifestly revealed, while for the śrāvakas it remains concealed or secret. Nevertheless, when it comes to the *Lotus Sūtra*, the case could be made that ultimate reality is revealed even for the śrāvakas, since the *Lotus Sūtra* is a discourse that is directed to śrāvakas whose spiritual capacities have been tamed and who have thereby entered into the first stage (*chuxin* 初心) of the ten faiths of the bodhisattva, that is to say, they have turned from the Hīnayāna to the Mahāyāna.²⁰

To summarize: in perspectives (1), (3), (A), and (C), ultimate reality is not revealed to the śrāvakas, but ultimate reality is revealed for the bodhisattvas. In cases (4) and (D), which correspond to the *Lotus Sūtra*, ultimate reality is manifestly revealed for the śrāvakas and the bodhisattvas, alike. By contrast, in the case of the Hīnayāna of perspectives (2) and (B), the teachings of the three vehicles are given out on behalf of the śrāvakas, but the fact that they are mere expedients is not manifestly explained, and the ultimate reality of the One Vehicle is kept concealed. Since they are not concerned with instructing the bodhisattvas per se, naturally they do not reveal ultimate reality. Consequently, even though the various Mahāyāna sūtras differ in their handling of the teaching of the śrāvakas, they are in common agreement on the point that ultimate reality is manifestly revealed for the bodhisattvas. Hence, on the basis of this point, the notion is

ultimate cause and effect,” “the absolute or final culmination of the Great Vehicle,” and “the One Vehicle.”

²⁰ Fascicle seven of the *Fahua yishu* (T 34.543b) states, “The disciple asks: ‘If the śrāvaka is able to enter the stages of the ten faiths when he converts from the Hīnayāna to the Mahāyāna, does he merely enter the first mind-set stage of the ten faiths or does he complete the stages of the ten

advocated that “there is no difference among the Mahāyāna sūtras with respect to their revealing of ultimate reality.”

If we take the *Lotus Sūtra* as the focus, then we can say: From the vantage point of instructing the bodhisattva, all of the Mahāyāna sūtras are to be regarded as having equal value—for Jizang, this affirmation is consistent in Jizang’s works. But when it comes to instruction and teaching of the śrāvakas, the charge might be made that the *Lotus Sūtra* still holds a kind of hegemonic supremacy over other Mahāyāna scriptures. One of the points that Jizang advances as a distinctive conceptual contribution of the *Lotus Sūtra* is the idea—based on the notion of the One Vehicle—that the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha are able to achieve Buddhahood.²¹ For, in effect, all the sūtras that come after the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* itself being excluded from this scheme) are understood to describe a process through which the śrāvakas are tamed to the point where they are prepared to receive the final instruction of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Where this point is expressed most clearly is in Jizang’s general concept of the “four tamings.”²²

Having examined this particular aspect of the equality of the Mahāyāna sūtras, let us now take a look at the basis on which differences and distinctions are established between the various Mahāyāna sūtras. In *Fahua xuanlun* vol.3, Jizang responds to this issue from the two perspectives of “primary and subsidiary theses (*pangzheng er yi* 傍正二義)

faiths in full?” Reply: ‘He merely enters the first mind-set stage of the ten faiths.’”

²¹ The second fascicle of the *Fahua lunshu* 法華論疏 (T 40.817c) says, “Moreover, the idea that the two vehicles will reach Buddhahood is the main theme of the *Lotus Sūtra*.” Fascicle seven of the *Fahua yishu* (34.544c) says, “Moreover, the idea that the two vehicles are given prophecy of future Buddhahood is itself the main theme of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and, therefore, we single it out for particular attention here. Fascicle eight of the *Fahua yishu* (T 34.565b) says, “The giving of prophecy of future Buddhahood to the two vehicles is the central point of the *Lotus Sūtra*, as well as the great theme of all the multitude of sūtras.”

²² The idea of the “four tamings” (*si tiaorou* 四調柔) means to tame or make receptive the spiritual capacities of the adherents of the two vehicles. This is accomplished by means of the four teachings of (1) the vehicle of gods and humans, (2) the two vehicles (of śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha), (3) the vehicle (of the *Prajñā* sūtras) that is taught by themselves (śrāvakas), and (4) the vehicle (of the *Vimalakīrti sūtra*) that is taught by the others (bodhisattvas).

and “differences in teaching arising from the differences of the salvific capacities of the sentient beings” (*douyuan butong* 逗緣不同).

Firstly, the distinction between “subsidiary and primary theses” takes the central teaching of a given sūtra as its “primary thesis” (*zhengzong* 正宗). “Subsidiary thesis” refers to any supportive teachings that are not given clear or direct exposition. For example, in the *Prajñā* sūtras, the notion of “having nothing to apprehend” is the primary thesis; in the *Lotus Sūtra*, it is the One Vehicle; in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, it is the concept of the Buddha-nature. For each of these respective sūtras, the other two doctrinal theses would, accordingly, be considered subsidiary theses. (In the *Prajñā* sūtras, for example, the One Vehicle and the Buddha-nature are treated as subsidiary theses.) The conceptual significance of this scheme might be construed as follows: At the same time that Jizang accounts for the very real fact of scriptural difference and discrepancy in terms of differences in primary thesis, he avoids the absolutization of discrepancies and distinctions among these texts by affirming the existence of subsidiary theses. While preserving discrepancy and difference within the sūtras, he concurrently elicits their points of commonality and provides a singular foundation for them in the idea of “there being no difference in their revealing of ultimate reality.”

In this respect, discrepancies and points of difference between various sūtras are grounded in differences of primary thesis. What explains the reason that in the sūtras the primary thesis is different is the idea of “differences in teaching arising from the differences of the salvific capacities of the sentient beings” (*douyuan butong* 逗緣不同). In the third fascicle of the *Fahua xuanlun* Jizang says: The myriad sūtras are not the same in their handling of the different salvific capacities of sentient beings. But in their mutual effort to deliver the teachings, they seek to avoid unnecessary duplication or redundancy. Because the inapprehensibility of ultimate reality is expounded at length in the *Prajñā* sūtras, in the *Lotus Sūtra* it is not treated in depth. And because the cause and effect of the One Vehicle is not expounded at length in the *Prajñā* sūtras, in the *Lotus Sūtra* it is expounded in detail. (T 34.388b)

As such, the way in which sūtras expound teachings that are adjusted specifically to the salvific capacities of sentient beings will vary from sūtra to sūtra; and as a consequence, unnecessary repetition of the central theme of a given sūtras is avoided. For example, in the passage that we quoted above, the idea of the inapprehensibility of ultimate reality is considered to be the teaching that is suited to the intended audience of the *Prajñā* sūtras; while for the intended audience of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the cause and effect of the One Vehicle is considered to be the appropriate doctrine. In this way, different forms of teaching are variously given out.

Part Three: Points of Commonality between Huiyuan and Jizang

Jizang's idea that "there is no difference between the Mahāyāna sūtras in their revealing of ultimate reality" is different in character from the tradition of doctrinal classification that would impose a hierarchy on the sūtras according to value. However, this is decidedly not a point that is unique to Jizang alone, for we can find antecedents to it in Jingying Huiyuan as well.²³

In the section of his *Dasheng yizhang* that treats "the doctrinal legacy of the sūtras," Huiyuan criticizes Liu Qiu's system of the five-period classification scheme, vigorously rejecting the latter's effort to establish absolute distinctions of value between the Mahāyāna sūtras on the premise of their degree of doctrinal profundity.²⁴ When we seek the real thrust of Huiyuan's thought on the subject, we find that it comprises the two elements of (1) "religious practice or development"(*xingde* 行德) and (2) "the Dharma or universal reality that is to be demonstrated"(*suo biao zhi fa* 所表之法). Examples of "religious practice"

²³ For Huiyuan's system of doctrinal classification, see Yoshizu Yoshihide, "Jōyō E'on no kyōhan ron," *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō gakubu kenkyū kiyō* vol.35 (March 1977).

²⁴ References to works of Jizang appear in the *zhongjing jiaojyi* 衆經教迹義(Doctrinal Legacies of the Sūtras) section of Huiyuan's *Dasheng yi zhang* 大乘義章, on which ground scholars argue that the text was amended by later followers of Huiyuan. See Suemitsu Chikamasa, "Daijō gishō 'shukyō kyōshaku gi' ni okeru Jō yō ji E'on sen no mondai – Kichizō no chosho to no taihi," *Sōtōshūkenkyū in kenkyūsei kenkyū kiyō* vol.13 (July 1981).

are like the arousing of the thought of enlightenment, practice of charity, moral restraint, *samādhi*, wisdom, liberation, acquisition of the Dharma-body, *dhāranī*, the One Vehicle, and the wonderful attainment of the perfect quiescence of Buddhahood. The Dharma to be demonstrated refers to the essential truth or teaching that one finds at the root of each and every scripture. For Huiyuan, it is a mistake to attribute major differences to the *Mahāyāna* sūtras by fixing one's attention solely on their manifold representations of religious practice. It is essential that one also recognize the element of equality by foregrounding the universal Dharma that individual sūtras expound in common. Because there are disparities in “religious practice”, there will be disparities in the thematic thrust of the sūtras. As such, discrepancies and distinctions will inevitably take shape between different texts.²⁵ The same idea is also expounded in the essay on the “two truths” in the *Dasheng yizhang*, but here Huiguang’s 慧光(468-537) classificatory system of the four doctrines is the target of criticism. Huiyuan states: “One must not engage lightly in making absolute determinations regarding the relative profundity of the different *Mahāyāna* sūtras.” (T 44.483b). When we compare the thought of Huiyuan as described here with that of Jizang, the universal “Dharma” spoken of by Huiyuan is in many ways identical with the “ultimate reality”(*dao* 道) spoken of by Jizang. Similarly, the differences in thematic thrust that Huiyuan attributes to disparities in program of “religious practice” are akin to the differences in “primary thesis” that Jizang ascribes to each sūtra.

To sum up, it could be said that in Huiyuan, as well, we find a way of thinking that is analogous to Jizang’s notion of “there being no difference among the *Mahāyāna* sūtras in their revealing of ultimate reality.” However, when it comes to the rationale for difference

²⁵ The *Dasheng yizhang* (T 44.466c-467a) says: As to the idea of fixed themes or meanings, discrete scriptures exist among the sūtras, and there are also differences in their doctrinal or thematic thrust. . . . The points that are illumined in these different sūtras will also be different in various ways. And yet, whatever contents they preach, they are the sublime practice conditionally born of the Great Vehicle and are the ultimate doctrine. We must not engage in trivial debates over differences in their relative status.

and distinction in the sūtras, Huiyuan treats it solely as a matter of difference in thematic thrust²⁶ and, as such, does not speak at all to the issue of “difference arising from the differences of the salvific capacities of sentient beings.” Like Jizang, Huiyuan subscribed to the idea of a twofold canon (i.e., Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna) and only accepted Huiguang’s distinction between four elemental systems of doctrine with a certain amount of criticism. But by turning his attention to this idea of “salvific capacity” (*yuan* 緣)—that is to say, the circumstances of sentient beings’ religious endowments and abilities—Jizang situated scriptural difference and discrepancy in relation to sentient beings proper, with the idea that sentient beings’ capacities are tamed and matured over time. In so doing, emphasis came to be placed on the formation of stratagems of doctrinal classification that sought to establish an organic or holistic unity among the sūtras and their teachings.²⁷

Part Four: Zhiyi’s View of the *Lotus Sūtra*

We have shown that Jizang affirmed a basic equality between the Mahāyāna sūtras, and that Huiyuan, as well, held similar views on this point. But was Zhiyi’s view of the sūtras, after all, one of a “*Lotus Sūtra* absolutism”? Or did it share features in common with that of Jizang and Huiyuan? We will look into this question now.

In the course of his individual explanations of the five aspects of profound meaning (*wuchong xuanyi*五重玄義), Zhiyi in the *Fahua xuanyi* introduces and criticizes various

²⁶ This is similar in kind to Jizang’s twofold distinction between “primary and subsidiary theses.”

²⁷ In *Fahua xuanhun* vol.1, where Jizang explains the ten great benevolences of the Thatāgata (T 34.367c-368a), and in the seventh fascicle on “the meaning of the parable of the Chapter on Faith and Understanding,” Jizang discusses the five-period classificatory system, for which he finds a singular basis in the parable of the Faith and Understanding Chapter [of the *Lotus Sūtra*]. This same point is made in the latter half of fascicle nine of the *Fahua xuanyi*: “The sūtras differ from one another in their illumination of doctrinal themes by dint of the fact that they are addressed to different spiritual capacities.” (T 33.795b). This would indicate that Jizang, ultimately, ascribes to the same basic intellectual problem as that expressed by Zhiyi and Guanding in their own handling of the five-period classification. On the relationship between the five-period classification and the parable of the Chapter on Faith and Understanding, see Kan’no, *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū*, pp. 615-826.

traditional explanations of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Among them, it is the explanation of Fayun 法雲 that he regards as most important and that he criticizes most vehemently.²⁸ Let us review for a moment its salient features.

According to the *Fahua xuanyi*, when Fayun compared the systems of salvific cause and effect taught in earlier sūtras with that elucidated in the *Lotus Sūtra*, he made a hard and fast distinction in status between these scriptures. The sūtras prior to the *Lotus Sūtra* he judged to be “crude” (*cu 粗*), on the grounds that they are narrow in doctrinal substance (*ti xia 體狹*), lowly in relative rank or stage (*wei xia 位下*), and short-term in their function (*yong duan 用短*). The *Lotus Sūtra* he regarded as “subtle and marvelous” (*miao 妙*), for the fact that it is broad in doctrinal substance (*ti guang 體廣*), lofty or elevated in rank or stage (*wei gao 位高*), and long-term in its function (*yong chang 用長*).²⁹ Zhiyi criticizes Fayun’s explanation from six perspectives, to each of which he applies four points of refutation: (1) the four criticisms with considering causal (*yin 因*) substance to be wide or narrow, (2) the four criticisms that attend construing causal rank or stage to be elevated or lowly, (3) the four criticisms with analyzing causal function in terms of long-term or short-term, (4) the four criticisms with considering resultant (*guo 果*) substance to be wide or narrow, (5) the four criticisms that attend resultant rank being seen as elevated or low, and (6) the four criticisms that attend resultant function being viewed as long-term or short-term.

In each of these cases, Zhiyi relies on Fayun’s idea that the *Lotus Sūtra* preaches a theory or doctrine of the so-called “four unities” (*siyi 四一*), namely, the idea that the doctrine is unitary (*jiaoyi 教一*), the practice is unitary (*xingyi 行一*), the person is unitary

²⁸ *Fahua xuanyi* vol.1B, T 33.691b-692c.

²⁹ This representation of Fayun differs somewhat from the explanation that appears in the current version of Fayun’s own *Fahua yiji* 法華義記; but here we will introduce it on the basis of the *Fahua xuanyi*. Concerning the explanation that appears in Fayun’s *Fahua yiji* proper, see Kan’no, *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū*, pp. 169-182.

(*renyi* 人一), and the truth is unitary (*liyi* 理一).³⁰ Turning them back on Fayun, Zhiyi uses these points to mount his fourfold refutation of Fayun's view of the *Lotus Sūtra* and its relationship to other Mahāyāna sūtras. If one asserts, as Fayun himself does, that the *Lotus Sūtra* was preached during the fourth of the five periods and, as such, does not expound the idea of the Buddha-nature or the eternal abiding of the Buddha, then it becomes untenable to claim that the “four unities” are conclusively expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*. As Zhiyi himself points out in his criticism, if the four unities are expounded in such texts as the *Prajñā* sūtras and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, must not the *Lotus Sūtra* thereby be “crude” and the *Prajñā* sūtras and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* be profound? Let us introduce the four criticisms by looking at the example of the first item of “causal substance being wide or narrow.”

When he compares the *Lotus Sūtra* with scriptures that allegedly preceded it, Fayun makes a rigid distinction between the two, taking the earlier scriptures to be “crude” and the *Lotus Sūtra* to be “marvelous” or “sublime.” According to Zhiyi, if the designation of “prior” sūtras is understood to refer to the tripiṭaka or Hīnayāna teaching, then Fayun's proposition is correct. But if one equates the idea of “prior” scriptures with any and all sūtras preached before the *Lotus Sūtra*, then they are unilaterally dismissed as “crude”, which must be regarded as a mistake.

Citing passages from the *Prajñā*, the *Brahmapariprcchā*, the *Avataṃsaka*, and the *Vimalakīrti* sūtras, Zhiyi shows that, even in these so-called “prior” sūtras, the Buddha expounds a “causal substance that is wide or broad.” Thus, elaborating on Zhiyi's basic point, we can say that in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* the two doctrines of the perfect teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教) and the separate teaching (*biejiao* 別教) are preached; in such

³⁰ Of the four items of doctrine, practice, person, and truth, “doctrine or teaching” (*jiao* 教) refers to the doctrine as expounded in the sūtras; “practice” (*xing* 行) refers to self-cultivation or practice as carried out in accordance with the doctrine; “person” (*ren* 人) refers to the individual who takes up the practice; and “truth” (*li* 理) refers to the ultimate reality or truth that is realized through the practice.

vaipulya-period scriptures as the *Brahmapariprecchā Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, the tripiṭaka (*sanzang* 三藏), pervasive (*tongjiao* 通教), separate, and perfect doctrines are all expounded; and in the *Prajñā* sūtras the three doctrines of the pervasive teaching, the separate teaching, and the perfect teaching are expounded. As such, it turns out that the perfect teaching is taught in virtually all of these scriptures and their periods, for which reason it comes to be called the “previously expounded perfect teaching” (i.e., the perfect teaching expounded prior to the *Lotus Sūtra*). Hence, along with the idea of a “previous perfect teaching” having been preached, Zhiyi argues that it is a mistake to rigidly categorize the Mahāyāna sūtras prior to the *Lotus Sūtra* (in which this perfect teaching is included) as crude.

Fayun was one of those persons who implicitly accepted the five-period doctrinal classification and who, therefore, took the *Lotus Sūtra* to be a sūtra that was inferior in status to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. Thus, while Fayun classifies the *Lotus Sūtra* as “marvelous” or “sublime”, he nonetheless considers the *Lotus Sūtra* incomplete (and inferior to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*) on the grounds that it does not preach the doctrine of the Buddha-nature and the eternal abiding of the Buddha. But if this is actually the case, wouldn’t Fayun’s explanation become self-contradictory and the *Lotus Sūtra* be regarded as “crude”? In essence, Zhiyi’s method for criticizing Fayun is to point out this contradiction to wit the incompatibility of claiming that the four unities are expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* and that cause and effect in the *Lotus Sūtra* are both “marvelous,” while maintaining that the *Lotus Sūtra* does not expound the idea of the Buddha-nature and the eternal abiding of the Buddha.

On the remaining five points of criticism we can be quite brief: By and large Zhiyi’s argument against Fayun is mounted, on one hand, as an attack on the one-sided and totalistic categorization of “prior sūtras” as crude and the *Lotus Sūtra* (the “current” scripture) as marvelous, and on the other, as a criticism of the contradiction inherent in Fayun’s rigid claim that the *Lotus Sūtra* is “marvelous”, even though it does not expound the eternity of the Buddha and the idea of the Buddha-nature. As a base of this criticism

we find Zhiyi's own view of the *Lotus Sūtra* and perfect teaching taking shape, which becomes apparent as he directs the attention to the existence of the perfect teaching in Mahāyāna sūtras prior to the *Lotus Sūtra* and to the claim that the *Lotus Sūtra*, in principle, expounds the doctrine of the Buddha-nature and the eternal abiding of the Buddha.

Zhiyi advocated that the Mahāyāna sūtras are basically equal in status, on the grounds that they all preach the perfect teaching. However, if one takes into account Zhiyi's classificatory system of the five periods³¹, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* combines an element of the separate teaching with a central exposition of the perfect teaching; the Hinayāna *tripitaka* (i.e., the *Āgama* sūtras) expounds only the *tripitaka* doctrine; the Mahāyāna *vaipulya* sūtras (the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, etc.) incorporate expositions of all four *tripitaka*, pervasive, separate, and perfect doctrines, using the three Mahāyāna doctrines to refute the Hinayāna; the *Prajñā* sūtras interpose the pervasive teaching between the perfect and separate doctrines. Finally, the *Lotus Sūtra* is judged to be a scripture that preaches only the perfect teaching, without intermixing the expedient doctrines of the *tripitaka*, pervasive, and separate teachings in the way that other Mahāyāna sūtras do.³²

³¹ Basically, Zhiyi divides or classifies the sequence of the Buddha's preaching of the dharma into the five periods of (1) the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, (2) the *Āgama* sūtras, (3) the *Vaipulya* sūtras, (4) the *Prajñā* sūtras, and (5) the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. This was a sequence of preaching that was especially devised by the Buddha in order to mature the spiritual capacities of the śrāvakas, for which reason it is referred to as the “distinctive or separate sequence of the five periods” (*bie wushi* 別五時). In contrast, the idea that the Buddha preached the sūtras of the five periods freely whenever and wherever the need arose is referred to as the “common five periods” (*tong wushi* 通五時).

³² According to *Fahua xuanyi* vol.1A (T 33.682b), it should be known that the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* preaches a perfect teaching that is admixed (*jian* 兼) with the separate teaching; the Hinayāna preaches the *tripitaka* doctrine alone (*dan* 但); the *Vaipulya* sūtras preach the unharmonized (*dui* 對) entire array of *tripitaka*, pervasive, separate, and perfect teachings; the *Prajñā* sūtras preach a pervasive doctrine that is interposed between and carries over (*dai* 帶) to the perfect and separate doctrines; and this *Lotus Sūtra* purely and directly preaches the highest enlightenment (*dao* 道) without further resorting to any of the previous admixed (*jian*), singular (*dan*), unharmonized (*dui*), or interspersed or linked (*dai*) forms of explanation. Hence it is called the “marvelous Dharma.”

If one confines oneself to the question of the progress of the Buddha's own career, then, generally speaking, his preaching of the Dharma can be said to have unfolded through the "distinctive sequence of the five periods," with the *Lotus Sūtra* serving as the final completion of the Buddha's message all largely out of concern for maturing the spiritual capacities of the śrāvakas. The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is judged to be of the same single flavor of ghee as the *Lotus Sūtra*, but is also understood to have been preached on behalf of sentient beings who were too late to hear the preachment of the *Lotus Sūtra* and for sentient beings of future ages. In other words, when it comes to consideration of the Buddha's career, the sūtras of the five periods were all preached in organic relation to one another; and especially for the śrāvaka these scriptures of the five periods are all but indispensable.³³ Therefore considering the *Lotus Sūtra* as something absolute and supreme is not consistent with Zhiyi's way of explaining things. For all of the sūtras of the five periods are, in one way or another, necessary and indispensable. They all have various roles to play; and they all contribute to the completion of the Buddha's preaching. For example, if it is to be only the *Lotus Sūtra* that is to be singled out, then the salvation of the śrāvakas would be impossible. For the spiritual capacities of the śrāvakas are progressively matured by means of the preaching of the various sūtras that were delivered during in the middle periods of the Buddha's career. In this way, preparations were first put into place for the śrāvakas to hear the *Lotus Sūtra* after which they were finally brought to salvation by the *Lotus Sūtra* itself.

I suspect that, in Tiantai 天臺 circles, it was Zhanran 湛然(711-782) who was responsible for touting a scriptural sectarianism that centered on the supremacy of the single text of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Moreover, this likely came in response to the Huayan 華嚴 school which claims the supremacy of a single sūtra such as the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. As my

³³ As far as the śrāvakas are concerned, all but the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* are necessarily required. However for one group of the bodhisattvas, there was no reason for whole of the sūtras of the five periods to be necessary.

last topic, I would like to take up the argument for this point.³⁴

Part Five: Conclusion.

Generally speaking, Chinese Buddhist doctrinal classification aimed to organize the discourses of the Buddha according to the manner in which they were delivered during the course of his own lifetime. As such, the temporal and geographical frame of reference for these classificatory investigations remains limited to the perspective of India during the period when the Buddha was active in the world. However, Zhiyi was active during an era when the dominant concern was to sort out the different teachings of the Buddha in order to ascertain which was the most genuine or applicable teaching for the time and place at hand. In this respect, his intellectual problem was different from that which sought to design classifications of doctrine that reflected the situation when the Buddha himself was alive. In his studies of the Buddhist sūtras, Zhiyi evidently placed great emphasis on affirming the existence of the perfect teaching as a principle of ultimate reality that is expounded in common throughout the Mahāyāna sūtras. And if this is the case, it is more fitting to call Zhiyi a “perfect teaching absolutist” than it is to refer to him as a “*Lotus Sūtra* absolutist.”³⁵

The important thing for Zhiyi is the idea that one must realize for oneself the perfect

³⁴ Ikeda Rosan, Tannen ni seiritsu suru goji hakkyō ron, *Indogaku bukkyō gaku kenkyū* vol.24-1 (December 1975); *idem*. Sekiguchi Shindai, *Tendai kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1988).

³⁵ The “ten marvels of the manifest trace” (*jimen shimiao* 迹門十妙) that are set forth in the *Fahua xuanyi* explain, on the basis of ten points, how the “manifest trace” section of the *Lotus Sūtra* is superior to all sūtras preached prior to the *Lotus Sūtra*. But in point of fact, it actually preaches that the perfect doctrine (*yuanjiao* 圓教) is superior to the tripiṭaka (*sanzang* 三藏), pervasive (*tongjiao* 通教), and separate (*biejiao* 別教) doctrines. The “ten marvels of the original substance” (*benmen shimiao* 本門十妙) explain how, because of the idea of the eternal enlightenment of the Buddha, the original substance [section of the *Lotus*] is superior to the manifest trace section of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The entire system places particular emphasis on the original substance section of the *Lotus Sūtra*, with the idea that this section openly reveals the original ground of the Buddha. But when we ask ourselves just what is the supreme teaching that is embodied and expounded by this eternally/distantly enlightened Buddha, it is something that finds its foundation in the perfect teaching that is itself the ultimate teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教) that is the epitome of the Buddha's teaching. Just as it was with the śrāvakas when the Buddha was alive, so in Zhiyi's day beings were thought to possess varying spiritual capacities. Taking into consideration this diversity, Zhiyi sought to design forms of religious practice that would bring about realization of the perfect teaching. In this respect, there is no reason to think that the diversity of spiritual capacities during Zhiyi's own day need be the same as that for the period when the Buddha was alive. As such, even though he designed the "perfect and sudden calming and contemplation" (*yuandun zhiguan* 圓頓止觀) or *Great Calming and Contemplation* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀) as a method of practice intended specifically for realization of the perfect teaching, out of consideration for the diversity of beings' spiritual capacities he also created the systems of gradual calming and contemplation and the indeterminate calming and contemplation. Then again, within the system of "perfect and sudden calming and contemplation" he also incorporated the diverse array of samādhi that we find organized under the rubric of the four forms of samādhi, all in the interest of accommodating different spiritual capacities. Under these circumstances, it is not at all surprising to find that Zhiyi taught various forms of samādhi that lay outside the *Lotus Sūtra*, including those based on such Mahāyāna sūtras as the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra* 般舟三昧經, the *Vaipulyadharanī Sūtra* 方等陀羅尼經, and the *Mañjuśrīpariprcchā Sūtra* 文殊問般若經. Why was this the case? Reliance on sūtras other than the *Lotus Sūtra* does pose a contradiction if we insist on regarding Zhiyi as a "Lotus Sūtra absolutist." But they decidedly do not pose a contradiction if we regard Zhiyi as a "perfect teaching absolutist."³⁶

³⁶ Sekiguchi Shindai advocated that the classificatory system of "five periods and eight doctrines" that has been taught since the time of Zhanran 湛然 is something that takes its stance in a kind of *Lotus Sūtra* absolutism. However, according to Sekiguchi, such an interpretation misconstrues Zhiyi's view of the sūtras, in so far as it does not take into account the four samādhis of the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀(*Great Calming and Contemplation*), the practices of which are based on such diverse sūtras as the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra*, the *Vaipulyadharanī Sūtra* 方等陀羅尼經, and the *Mañjuśrīpariprcchā Sūtra* 文殊問般若經. See Sekiguchi Shindai, *Tendai kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1988). As I have suggested in this essay, it is necessary to

In this way, whenever we reflect on Zhiyi's view of the Buddhist sūtras, I think it appropriate that we do so by making a distinction between the two projects of sorting out the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma with reference to the era when the Buddha himself was alive, and the concern for the concrete religious practice or application of the Buddha's teachings that typified the new Buddhism of the era when Zhiyi himself was active.

recognize a clear distinction between forms of doctrinal classification that have as their hermeneutic focus the period when the Buddha was alive, and an approach to the sūtras that arises from a concern for religious practice that addresses the circumstances of Zhiyi himself and persons living in Zhiyi's own time. For example, even though we might say that Zhiyi preached a classificatory system of "five periods and eight teachings" that opens the way to a kind of *Lotus* absolutism, this is an idea that took as its object the period when the Buddha himself was alive. We must conclude that the standpoint of Zhiyi himself was one of an absolutism of the perfect teaching.

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